

# GOSSIP OF THE DRAMA FROM MANY POINTS OF VIEW

## Today and Its Music.

### W. J. Henderson Writes of This as a Transitional Age and Looks Backward With Longing.

It is not at all likely that we are good judges of our own time. We have not the necessary perspective for we are like a man looking at his own face in a brook. After all he does not see it as others see it, and if he breathes a little upon the surface of the water, he distorts the reflection of his own features. Still, we are but human, and we are, therefore, mightily interesting to ourselves. We cannot refrain from studying our own features in the mirror, nor can we abstain from speculation about our own time.

Those who think about music must often wonder whether we have any great composers just now. We are obliged to confess that we cannot perceive any, though we are harassed with doubts in regard to Richard Strauss. Whether the future will call him a great man or not, is just what we cannot determine. We have the comfort of his own assurance, but that does not greatly assist us. Strauss seems to have no doubts. When he wrote "A Hero's Life" he carefully identified his hero by introducing in the finale the identifying motives of his own principal compositions. These were his hero's "works of peace."

#### Who Knew They Were Great?

But it does not follow that a man is a great composer because he thinks so himself. To be sure, most of the great masters have had at least inklings of their greatness. Bach seems to stand alone in his complete ignorance of his own importance. If, however, he had possessed an applauding public, and few industrious parasites in the shape of German journalists to ring hyphenated changes on his achievement—he, too, might have become a megalomaniac.

Handel, on the other hand, was not permitted to entertain any doubts. London claved at his feet, and sent up such a perfume of adulation to his nostrils that he must have been more than human to doubt that he was penning music which was to enlighten the world and make glad the wilderness.

Mozart was also told about his own greatness, and Vienna did not allow Papa Haydn to languish in ignorance. Even Beethoven, who was less troubled by public adulation than some others, had his own ideas about himself, and he betrayed them when he answered the boastful "land proprietor" with his crushing "brain proprietor."

#### Old Music and Good Music.

In truth, it seems that there never was a period when so few masters of music lived. Modern music may be said to have begun with the Netherlands school of composers in 1425. The school lasted for two centuries, and in that time lived such masters as Ockeghem, Hobbrecht, Brumel, Josquin des Pres, Willaert, di Rore, Arcadelt, Swelink and Orlando Lasso, whose music is still beautiful to our ears, when sung as the Musical Art Society knows how to sing it.

Before Lasso died the great Palestrina had given his masterpieces to the world and founded that splendid Roman school, which was continued by Nanini, Vittoria, Anerio and Allegri. In Venice the seed sown by Willaert had blossomed in the works of the Gabriellis, Legrenzi, and Lotti. In 1600 began the long line of operatic masters, and at the very outset in 1608 a work of real genius was found in Monteverdi's "Orfeo." Meanwhile the instrumental players were rising and the school of clavier performers soon produced its Domenico Scarlatti, son of Alessandro Scarlatti, himself a man of extraordinary talent and founder of the great Neapolitan school of opera writers.

Two years after the birth, in 1632, of Domenico Scarlatti, Handel and Bach were born, and the mighty procession of German masters began. Haydn, Mozart, Beethoven, Schubert, Weber, Schumann, Brahms, and Wagner brought the line of progress down to 1897, when Brahms died, and the German line apparently ran out. In all that stretch of time from 1425 to almost the end of the nineteenth century there was never a lull in which there was no great master.

#### Masters for All Time.

It is idle to say that the music of the composers of the golden age of church counterpoint has only a historical interest now. One has only to hear it to be convinced of its genuine greatness and of its possession of the unquenchable spark of genius. So long as men sit at the feet of the invisible and seek to pour out the emotions of their hearts in song, so long will this music live and lift the thoughts of humanity to higher planes than any music written for the sanctuary in later times except that of Bach. It is not concert music and it certainly has not those priceless "elements of popularity," which occupy such a high position in the esteem of the masses.

The masterpieces of Josquin and Willaert and Lasso and Palestrina are not hawked about the country by traveling orchestras nor by brass bands with attitudinizing conductors. But they live as masterpieces none the less and strike their flame of conviction into every artistic mind.

For the rest doubt offers no obstacles. Handel satisfies the masses with his "Messiah" and Bach keeps his hold on the concert hall with his violin pieces and a few of his fugues. Occasionally the "St. Matthew Passion," or some other of his great works, is given, and ever and anon some such strange and moving spectacle as a festival performance of the B Minor Mass or the "Christmas Oratorio" is thrown upon the pallid screen of a musical season. But no one questions the mastery of these men, and in the presence of the music of Bach all the drivings of the little

groundlings of contemporaneous Germany are as the prattle of children beside the utterances of a Socrates.

#### A New Light.

There is substantial ground for believing that the next composer who shows genuine mastery and ascends by divine right of genius to a seat in the august senate of the lords of song will be an opener of wholly new paths. The lessons of musical history cannot be disregarded. The polyphonic period, in which the intensely intellectual abstraction of the fugal principle was worked out to the limit of its fecundity, most certainly came to an end with Bach. Fugues have been made since the day of the author of the "Kunst der Fuge," but only over his patterns. Only Beethoven succeeded in breathing a single semblance of individuality into music of this type, and even his work owes its power to its obedience to laws firmly established before his time.

The writers of the classic period gave us the fully developed sonata form, which embodied within itself the fundamental principles of harmonic, as distinguished from polyphonic music. There is, to be sure, nothing to prevent future composers from using the classic sonata. For many high and inspiring purposes of musical art it cannot be excelled. But it is not wholly suited to the proclamation of the message, to the utterance of the individual communication, which every composer since Beethoven seems to think it the chief purpose of music to give forth.

Beethoven himself found it advisable to make certain modifications in the outward features of the form in order to give it a greater pliability. Schumann went still further in his union of all four movements of the D minor symphony and his employment of the same themes in different parts of the work. Later composers have followed his lead. Liszt's "symphonic poem" may be set aside for the moment as a separate branch of form, but we are all familiar with the program note which tells us that the composer "in order to give the work organic unity has introduced the theme of the opening movement again in the finale." This is done over and over in works in the sonata form.

From the symphonic poem to the tone poem of Strauss and others is hardly a step, yet there is a difference between the two. The change is in the direction of imparting definite significance to themes, after the manner of the Wagnerian drama, and of exhausting the resources of thematic development in the expression of emotional movement and variation.

#### Awaiting the Pathfinder.

All of these modifications of the simple classic method of instrumental composition appear to the thoughtful observer to be manifestations of the unsettled conditions of a period of transition. They obviously have no finality. They do not come upon the mind with the conviction of inevitableness. Something which music is striving to reach lies above and beyond them. Even in lyric drama, where the tremendous power of Wagner's majestic works convinced us all that the problem had, at least for that department of the art, been finally solved, there are evidences of unrest, and the utter impracticability of the Wagnerian system for general use stands confessed.

With music in this state it is not at all remarkable that no great composer is in sight, for when he comes he will be a bearer of wood and a drawer of water. We shall unquestionably misunderstand him at first, for he will be ahead of us all. But when we come to read his message aright we shall cry out, as Wagner did about Beethoven, "Let us then celebrate the great pathfinder in the wilderness of the degenerated Paradise."—W. J. Henderson, in the New York Sun.

## Coming to the Theaters.

The playing of "Caste" by the Columbia stock company this week at the Columbia Theater will arouse many of the pleasantest memories of theatergoers of all classes and should prove a profitable and highly amusing entertainment. There is scarcely a better play of similar type known to the modern stage. It is a comedy where the amusing qualities are not dependent upon the fripperies of any one day or time, or any one set of people, but where the characters have been drawn in a manner well calculated to provoke simultaneously in true heart interest and wholesome laughter wherever and whenever they are set forth amid the proper surroundings. The comedy is a comedy that lives and profits by the living. It has the true ring of quality about it, and capably portrayed, "Caste" becomes and is one of the best vehicles ever constructed to display the talents of a company of well-trained players.

"Caste" is one of the standards of the stage and is regarded by many as a classic. It is by Robertson, the author of "David Garrick" and other plays of kindred merit, and ranks with the highest. Yet it is a play whose characters and story appeal to all types of theatergoers. The boy of the gallery fairly bursts with laughter at the many broadly humorous sayings and doings of Sammy Gerridge and Polly, while the older folk down stairs readily appreciate the finely good qualities and the intrinsic worth in the offering that brings to them so much enjoyment.

There are no less than seven principal characters in "Caste," and each of these the current week will be in the hands of a capable player. The play is one of exceptional opportunities, in which each of the principals shares almost equally. Eugene Ormonde will be seen as the Hon. George D'Alroy, and his interpretation of such an important and respected role is looked forward to with much interest. Miss Cortelyou will have an adequate opening for the display of her untalented talents, and should make one of the most pleasing impressions of her brief, but already popular, career. Wallace Worsley will play Captain Hawtree, making his debut in a splendid part. Robert Ferguson's

characterization of the tippling Eccles should be very interesting. Geoffrey Stein will have a pure comedy role as Sam Gerridge, and his playing of it should develop much laughter. Alice Butler will have an opportunity for serious comedy work as the Marquise, while Grace Atwell as Polly will have a very congenial role. There will be two matinees, Thursday and Saturday, and both at popular prices.

#### Chase—"The Mascot."

"The Mascot," probably the most successful comic opera ever played in this country, and certainly the best known, will be presented at Chase's Theater this week, commencing at the matinee tomorrow, under more auspicious conditions of presentation, Mr. Chase avers, than have attached to any performance of the opera since its original production a score of years ago.

A company of artists and comedians of eminence, as their names attest, has been especially secured, and the scenery and costumes will rival in brightness and newness any of the modern productions. Milton Aborn, the well known comic opera impersonator, will distinguish the production by his reappearance after a number of years in the role of the luckless and superstitious monarch, Lorenzo, a part in which he attained note in the early years of the success of "The Mascot." Dorothy Morton, who at once ingratiated herself in the affections of the Chase patrons last Monday by her heroism on the stage in extinguishing the fire, will appear as Bettina, the mascot. Miss Morton has sung the part with great success, and she is even more charming in it than as Zerlina in "Fra Diavolo." Moreover, Miss Morton promises a sensation for the feminine element of auditors in exhibiting, as the Countess of Padana, her beautiful jeweled dress, which she values at \$2,000, and which is credited with being the costliest comic opera stage gown ever worn in this country.

Robert Dunbar, the handsome singer recently here with Maybelle Gillman, in "The Mocking Bird," has been secured to sing Pippo, and he will make an attractive lover. Frank Wooley, who has become quite a favorite, will remain to do Rocco, the unhappy farmer. Kate Vart will wear masculine attire in the part of Frederick, and she will make a stunning appearance. She has been with Frank Daniels for several seasons and originated the part of Lady Dorothea in "Miss Simplicity." Pretty Gertrude Rutledge will play the Princess Flanetta. Matteo will be sung by Fred Urban, and the Doctor by Richard T. Jones.

The matinees will be Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. It should be borne in mind that "The Mascot" inaugurates the next to the last week of the Chase summer opera season. The additional announcement is made in connection with the performance of "The Mascot" that Fred Frear has been retained for "The Mascot," owing to his great popularity here and also to the fact that Mr. Chase has only been able to present him but one week this season.

#### Lafayette—Musical Comedy.

An attraction of unusual interest will be offered at the Lafayette Theater next Monday, and for a brief season, after next week. The organization will open with "The Girl From Paris," and follows with "The French Maid," "The Lady Slavey," and "The Bille of New York." All four pieces will be well mounted and costumed.

The company comes here after a season in the South. It was organized to play in the Leath & Wells theaters, and has won much praise from press and public. There are forty-five people in the company. The principals have scored big successes in the musical comedy field and the chorus is the inevitable "beauty show." The organization includes two stage managers, a musical director, a ballet master, wardrobe mistress, electricians, and stage carpenters, and the other men needed for the proper presentation of the plays.

The scenery is all new, having been built, and the costumes made, specially for this organization. The stage is under the direction of W. H. Fitzgerald, for many years with the Bostonians, and the musical director is Hans S. Litzke. The dances for all productions are arranged and directed by Lewis Hooper.

Miss Deyo, whose success in "The Country Girl" at Daly's last season was widely noted, is at the head of the organization. Miss Deyo has danced in every capital in Europe and Madam Sembrich has said of her that she dances with more temperance than any dancer, American or foreign, before the public. Sylvester James, Arthur Barry, John Young, Charles Gibby, Margaret Burnham, Bessie Tannehill, Mattie Martz, Nellie Victoria, Joseph Phillips, are others of the cast. "The Girl From Paris" will serve to exploit.

The piece will be given with all the dash and sparkle that marked its original presentation, though it has been brought up to date with some new specialties.

## A Diminutive Actress.

### The Rise and Success of "Linnie Gee" After a Start in Washington.

The youngest, though by no means the least interesting, of the members of the Lafayette stock company this season, has been Linnie Gee, a diminutive, but charming little player of eight years of age, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Edwin S. Gee of this city. When but four years of age she made her initial bow in public, and even then showed remarkable self-possession.

Miss Linnie has a number of accomplishments, not the least of which are her singing and dancing. She has assisted a number of the leading organizations in Washington and Baltimore at their entertainments, and has many friends in both cities, as well as in New York. Unlike many older and more ex-

perienced members of the profession she never misses a cue nor loses a line. Her first professional engagement was at Glen Echo, where she appeared in a juvenile sketch with Master Elmer Donn, of this city, for one week. Her next attempt was with the Bellows stock company in "The Little Pilgrims," in which she took the part of Tot Washington. Mr. Bellows was much pleased with her work, and also gave her a part in "A Midsummer Night's Dream." Last winter she went to New York with the intention of accepting a part in the "Truth Tellers," to be presented



Linnie Gee.

under the direction of Belasco. The production of this play, however, having been postponed, she obtained the part of Maisie in "The Little Princess," which she held during the New York engagement of three months. During this season she has been Michael in "The Resurrection," Adrienne in "A Celebrated Case," and Meenie in "Rip Van Winkle."

The role of Adrienne gave her perhaps her best opportunity, and it was the general verdict that her interpretation of the part was exceptionally clever, the role having given her a chance for emotional work of unusual importance for a child. As Rip Van Winkle's daughter Meenie, she won the hearts of all who saw her, for her affection for her vagabond father. In the second act Meenie and Hendrick (Edna Hall Smith) are left alone in the cottage during a terrific thunder storm, and the two children invariably gained applause and laughter by their clever acting.

Miss Linnie has a family of dolls, one for each character she has assumed, and, although extremely loyal to the entire family, Adrienne is the one upon whom she has bestowed the greater part of her affection. She has won the regard of the management and the members of the company by her conscientious work, as well as by her charming and childish ways, and they are all watching her progress with interest. Miss Linnie will return to New York in the fall to take part in one of the new productions.

## Maeterlinck at Home.

### A Poet Who Writes Musical Prose, But Loves No Music.

Experience of a saddening sort long ago taught me that a man and his works are two; that a poet never looks like a poet; a composer is seldom harmonious in private life. Yet I could not be but tempted when a brief courteous note from the author of "Monna Vanna" informed me that he would give me an evening hour for an informal interview. Thus writes James Huncker, the critic of the "New York Sun."

Maeterlinck lives on the Rue Reynouard in a small house, the garden of which overlooks the Seine from the moderate heights of Passy. To reach his apartments I had to traverse a twisted courtyard, several mysterious staircases built on the corkscrew model and finally was ushered into an antechamber full of screens, old engravings, fans, much ornamental brass, and reproductions of Mantegna, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, and other painters.

But I was not to abide there long. A maid with doubting eyes piloted me across a narrow hallway, through a room where sat a firewoman altering theatrical costumes—had the eternal feminine, I thought—and at last I was not in M. Maeterlinck's presence. Not yet.

Down another staircase, and the great man loomed up in cycling costume, cordial, grave, a big, handsome fellow with big Flemish bones and a small round head, with wavy hair dappling at the temples. A man of forty-two, a gentle, pensive sort of man, Maurice Maeterlinck does not look like his photographs for the reason that they were taken nearly a decade ago.

He is much older, much more vigorous in mind I pictured him. The general race characteristics are Flemish or Belgian—that is, Germanic and not Gaul. This he knows well and realizes that his work must ever be exotic to the logical mind of the Frenchman, for whom the form is paramount to the idea.

Maeterlinck's eyes are what the French call flowers of the head. A gray blue, with hints of green, they are melancholy eyes, these, with long dark lashes. He is extremely modest, even diffident, though touch him on his favorite theme and he responds readily. A devourer of English literature, he will not venture into conversation in our tongue, for he has had little practice. German he speaks, and he knows Italian. He told me that in composing "Monna Vanna," he read D'Annunzio for a year so as to get historical color. He was quite frank about the conception of this play.

#### Written for Mme. Maeterlinck.

"I wrote it for Mme. Maeterlinck," he remarked simply, which disposed of my theory that the piece was written

to prove he knew how to make a drama on conventional lines. "Joyzeille" was also written for the same actress, a woman who has played an important role in the poet's life. Then I brought up Browning's "Luria" and the opinion of Prof. Phelps, of Yale, that Maeterlinck had profited by reading the English poet when he composed "Monna Vanna." M. Maeterlinck smiled.

"Naturally I read Browning; who does not?" he said with the naive intonation that becomes him so well. "Luria" I have known for a long time; but 'Luria' is not a stage play," which, coming from the author of "Les Aveugles," I considered sublime. He is quite right—"Monna Vanna" and "Luria" have little in common except being laid at Pisa and that both Luria and Prinszavalle were treated badly by an ungrateful country. But there was Coriolanus and a host of other historical patriots.

The "Jempest" coincidence has been alluded to. Here again Maeterlinck made no reservations. He spoke of Shakespeare as other men mention their deity. He knows Poe very well, and Walt Whitman. I surprised the dramatist by telling him that the Franklin Sargent School had produced his early plays; that Ibsen was no stranger to us, and that, with Hauptmann and other moderns, New York witnessed these plays in a regular theater and not in some artistic barn up a back alley off another alley of dear old Montmartre.

At first it was M. Maeterlinck's intention to publish "Joyzeille" in book form. He feared Russia and the calm way the Russian managers appropriate French and German plays without remitting royalties. He saw a way to escape this country—without a foreign copyright law. A friend, a native resident, has translated the play and protected his translation. So, if the work is performed, the author will benefit by it and not lose, as he did in the case of "Monna Vanna," over 100,000 francs in Russia alone.

#### No Love for Music.

Too polite to pass any comment upon Claude Debussy's opera, fashioned out of "Pelléas and Melisande," M. Maeterlinck made the astonishing confession that he did not, could not, appreciate music. He heard sounds, but their meaning, their symbolism, whether sensuous or idealistic, totally escaped him.

I reminded him of Zola, Flaubert, Hugo, Gautier, De Goncourt as writers, poets, who had no tolerance for "the most costly of noises." Daudet loved Wagner, Turgenyev Mozart. But the second act Meenie and Hendrick (Edna Hall Smith) are left alone in the cottage during a terrific thunder storm, and the two children invariably gained applause and laughter by their clever acting.

I wonder if all the great prose writers were music-deaf. Charles Lamb was; so was Sir Thomas Browne, though he talks much of the "heavenly art." Walter Pater knew music, and today so does Arthur Symonds. Maeterlinck is quite frank in his likes and dislikes, though I didn't venture to ask him his opinion of his contemporaries, especially of Octave Mirbeau, his early admirer and sponsor, as I had seen "Les Affaires sont les Affaires," but I really had not the courage to inquire of Maeterlinck if he had. It would have been too cruel. The poet-dramatist spoke admiringly of Arthur Symonds and his poetry.

"He looks like a poet—a rare thing," to which I cordially assented. Then came the inevitable autographs and a much wearied man bowed me out and down queer staircases into lonely courts paved with harsh stones, where dwarf trees stood sentinel fashion and presented branches as I passed into the cool of the street.

The coachman, quite oblivious to the fact that Maeterlinck was Maeterlinck, grumbled at the length of my absence. I did not blame him. For an hour he had leaned against the skinny forelegs of his old nag to prevent the beast from slipping down the hilly street. After so much experience in holding up animals the bandit with a whip held me up and I bled freely at the pocketbook. Why revolt? I had my interview with Maurice Maeterlinck, and a childish detail like wealth had no meaning for me.

## Scenery for "Much Ado."

### An Investiture Which Adorns the Comedy and Illuminates It.

Max Beerbohm waxes enthusiastic in the "London Saturday Review," over the scenery which Gordon Craig has provided for his mother's (Ellen Terry) production of "Much Ado About Nothing" in London. He says:

"By the elimination of details which in a real scene would be unnoticed, but which become salient on the stage, he gives to the persons of the play a salience never given to them before."

"As for beauty, it stands to reason that figures moving or posed before simple backgrounds must create a more beautiful effect than is created by figures moving among a lot of objects as definitely salient as themselves. Perhaps the most beautiful of Mr. Craig's effects, and the most characteristic of his special style, is when Balthazar sings to the accompaniment of three long-haired minstrels who are seen by us silhouetted against the sky, in the arches of a long straight viaduct of clipped yew trees."

To a certain extent Mr. Craig is hampered by dealing with a definite period and place, wherein the dresses must be more or less correct in archaology. His widely exquisite inventiveness in costume is one of his strongest points. In Leonato's masque, indeed, he can and does let himself go. An enchanting sight are the masquers, in their uniform gowns of silver lozengers, with diadems

of mistletoe on their heads, and waving in their hands great hoops of green leaves.

"I hope that ere long he will have another sheerly fantastic play wherein to lavish the fantasy of his own spirit. There are many such plays that need him. Above all, no play of Maeterlinck has yet been entrusted to him. That is to say, Maeterlinck has not yet been staged in the right way by the right man."

## A Death of Good Readers.

### One Respect in Which the Shakespearean Revival May Suffer.

"As for the Shakespearean revival which is promised for next autumn, it is rather too early to discuss the subject just yet," observes the "New York Evening Post." "It may not be too soon, however, to utter a word of caution against undue enthusiasm."

"Without entering into particulars of personalities, it can be noted that not all the performers who have proclaimed their intention of interpreting famous Shakespearean personages next winter have proved their fitness for the undertaking. Some of them, when last heard in public, appeared to be wholly ignorant of the first principles of elocution. But they have the summer before them, and genius—of the possession of which they all carry box-office certificates—can do much in three months. Let us hope that a new generation of gifted actors is about to be revealed."

But how about the players who are to support these brilliant beings? Where are the two or three hundred actors capable of speaking a few lines of verse musically and intelligently to be found? How is it that none of them got into that famous 'all-star' cast of 'Romeo and Juliet' of which the talk was so very, very feeble? There is reason to fear that the answers to these questions will be only too evident by and by.

"If it is not possible now to provide one decent Shakespearean company, is it not a little unreasonable to hope for half a dozen of them next autumn?"

## Another Actress 'Discovered'

### William Archer Pays a Fine Tribute to Miss Darragh.

An emotional piece of extravagant character called "Margot" and attributed to Daudet, has been produced in London. It is all about a beautiful passionate woman, who entertains many lovers about whom she lies to her husband, until she is found out, when she swallows poison, but lies on.

The nature of the piece may be divined from the fact that Courtney Thorpe performed in it. The only reason why it is mentioned now is that a new actress who played the heroine won the approbation of William Archer, who writes of her: "I do not remember to have seen Miss Darragh before, but I shall be curious to see her again. With some disadvantages—notably a very sharp, metallic voice—she combines many, and far more than equivalent, advantages. She is earnest and unaffected; her movements and attitudes are graceful; she has a great deal of nervous and emotional force, and she shows, on occasion, not only intelligence but originality and even a touch of daring. In her death scene, for instance, there were quite remarkable moments. On the other hand, in her outburst of hysterical rage the shrillness of her voice became painful and I could not distinguish a single word she uttered. If Miss Darragh can soften her tones a little, and guard against sudden accessions of harshness, she has unquestionable qualifications for a certain line of parts."

## Beerbohm Tree's School.

### English Actor Will Teach Shakespeare for Love.

The following is from the "London Chronicle":

"The scheme of Mr. Tree for the institution of a dramatic school mainly for the performance of Shakespeare's plays is nearly an accomplished fact. Directly after his production of 'Richard II,' in September, he will begin the rehearsals of this company, and in order to show his personal interest in the undertaking he has determined to devote his time in the new year to their performances."

The result of his labors will be awaited with interest. It is not probable that he will be able to effect much, but the mere fact that managers are beginning to perceive that actors require some sort of training is an encouraging sign.

#### Orrin Johnson a Star.

It can be considered quite out of the ordinary for writers of books to select for their heroes persons whom they know. This sometimes happens, but is quite unusual. When Hallie Erminie Rives was collecting material for her novel, "Hearts Courageous," she was much perplexed in not being able to find a man in real life whom she could typify as the hero of her story. She had in mind quite a number of men, but none seemed to meet her requirements in the creative stages for the leading character of the book. When she did find her ideal it was by a mere accident. She chanced one evening to attend a performance at a theater in New York, where Orrin Johnson was the principal male player in the cast.

The play had not progressed far until she realized that Mr. Johnson possessed distinctive personalities which would blend with her ideas of the character in question. At the conclusion of the performance she was firm in her conclusions that she had at last discovered her ideal. She communicated this information to no one, not even to Mr. Johnson, and in writing her book she had him in mind all the while, though frequently going to the theater to witness his performance, thus familiarizing herself

more thoroughly with his prominent characteristics.

When writing the book she had no particular thought of its being dramatized. This was an after consideration, and now that it has been done, and Mr. Johnson selected to make the production and become the head of his own company, it naturally adds increased interest to the play, as the star in the dramatization is in fact the hero of the novel.

#### Trouble Over Wagner.

The Wagner monument committee in Berlin is in a peck of trouble concerning the unveiling exercises in October. Resignations from the honorary committees have been coming in thick and fast. Berlin's heroic Wagner tenor, Albert Niemann, has sent in a vigorous and sweeping protest against the conduct and plans of the committee; the daily and musical press has begun a fusillade of criticism on the monument, ridiculing even the Emperor's contribution to it, the composition of the committee, and its plans, and it seems more than likely that the whole ceremony will be a ridiculous fizzle, or farce.

## A Preacher and the Drama.

### Cyrus Townsend Brady Reviews a Season's Plays.

Having been favored with a number of visitors during the past winter, it happens that, as host or guest, I have gone to the theater more than usual. Looking over my notebook, I count twenty-one performances of various sorts witnessed during the season. Some brief analysis of what was seen may be of interest in throwing some light upon the dramatic conditions of New York at the present time.

At a banquet given by the Women's Press Club not long since, I heard Herr Conrad, the new operatic impresario in succession to Maurice Grau, say that the theater had taken, or might take, the place of the church as the teaching force of the community; that there were vastly more people in the theaters of New York every night than were gathered in all the churches of the city on Sunday; and that, therefore, the educative power of the theater was simply enormous. This takes no account of one valuable function of the drama, namely, that it shall distract and amuse without the necessity of teaching any particular lesson.

Whether he was dreaming dreams or seeing visions of what ought to be instead of what is, I have no means knowing. Indeed, I quote his remark from memory, and am therefore subject to correction, but they started me thinking upon the subject, with the determination on my part to see just what sort of sermons the theaters had been preaching; to put fact and imagination side by side.

I enjoy going to the theater when the play is a proper one, well acted, well staged, and so on. I am quite willing to concede the vast possibilities for good influence that the theater holds forth, and to count the actors as fellow-ministers of grace, provided they are worthy of the title. I will also admit that the actual educative power of the theater is really enormous; and further, that if it were all exerted in one way, and that a good way, a high way, a noble way, it would be among the most beneficial of our modern institutions. That is the theory. But what are the facts? What is the influence of the theater as I found it this past season? What sort of sermons is it preaching?

#### The Best of the Good Plays.

Let me state, before going further, that I did not wittingly go to any performance which I was previously informed was of a disreputable character. I attended only the best theaters, to hear the best actors or companies. On the list are no comic operas nor vaudeville performances, although sometimes the comic opera and the vaudeville are as harmless and amusing. I take it, as any other form of theatrical performance; but there is none on the list, which, however, includes two so-called grand operas. Nor did I visit any theaters other than the very best, those highest in public consideration. It is difficult to classify accurately the various plays, but the following may give us a basis of consideration.

Out of twenty-one plays, eight were entirely unobjectionable; of these eight, four—50 per cent—were deadly dull! Two of the latter four were the veriest tawdle, having neither originality of plot, brilliancy of dialogue, nor human interest of any sort, save for a few cynical witticisms and some beautiful stage settings, gowns, and scenery. Not even the good acting of the actors could redeem them. They were both of them popular plays and are not worth criticizing. The remaining two of the dull quartet were melodramas, harking back to historical novels, and though the novels were good, the plays were beneath contempt. These performances made one sleepy, being in that effect, indeed, not unlike certain sermons I have heard.

Of the four plays which were interesting and unexceptionable, one was Shakespeare's "Julius Caesar," a superb performance of that wonderful drama, good for everyone both to see and to hear; the other two were civil war plays, one from a Southern, the other from a Northern, standpoint; both were well mounted and brilliantly played. The fourth was a drama of Rome in the Middle Ages, and was altogether charming. It was old-fashioned in its character, and reminded me of the famous plays of a previous generation. The critics in the daily papers spoke of it with patronizing condescension.

#### Eleven "Objectionable" Offerings.

Then I count eleven performances—nameless in this article—which, in one form or another, were objectionable. Perhaps that is a harsh word by which to characterize some of them, but it does very well for the class. A play which turns upon a sexual problem, or